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Annual report of the State Land Agent of Montana

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Tenth Annual Report

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OF

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GOVERNOR OF MONTANA

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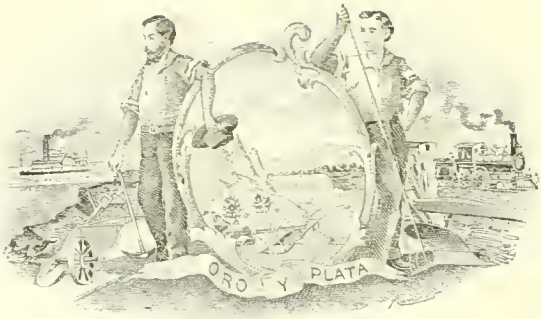
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TENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

STATE LAND AGENT

Office of the State Land Agent.
Helena, Montana. December 1, 1900.

To His Excellency,
Robert B. Smith,
Governor of Montana.

Sir:—

I have the honor to submit herewith, the following report of this office for the fiscal year commencing December 1, 1899, and ending November 30, 1900.

SELECTION OF STATE LAND.

There were selected in the past year by your Agent 228,814.39 acres of land; 7,340.88 acres of which is valuable timber land and the remainder is grazing land selected on the application of prospective lessees. 208,690 acres has been placed under lease at the rate of $80.00 per section per annum. 4,000.00 acres selected in the Judith Basin is fine bench land, and it is the belief of your Agent that this land will soon be worth $10.00 per acre as most of it can be farmed. It has been my policy during the performance of my official duties to select such lands as in my judgment will prove valuable in the near future without waiting for some applicant to lease.

Nearly all this land selected is placed to the credit of the School Fund as Indemnity School land in lieu of sections 16 and 36 which fall within the Ft. Peck and Blackfeet Indian Reservations and part of the Bitter Root and Lewis and Clarke

Forest Reserves. All the lands desired to be relinquished by the Board have been fully covered by Indemnity Selections.

There are remaining approximately 500,000 acres of School Lands tied up in Indian and Forest Reserves yet. If the State will surrender these lands and secure others in lieu thereof, the lands so taken could be leased at the rate of $80.00 per section per annum, making an annual rental of $62,500.00. It is fair to presume that some of these reserves will not be thrown open for 25 years. If the State in the meantime had her lands to lease the school fund would be increased over One Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars. I believe it would be a wise policy for the State to relinquish its school lands in these reserves as soon as possible, thereby adding materially to the School Fund.

CONTESTS.

There were two contest cases during the year; one with James Wright of Choteau County who had resided upon a piece of land for several years, and one year before he filed his papers for final proof, removed a part of his household goods, also 16 head of cattle, 8 horses, farm implements and several wagons to the Dominion of Canada, being allowed to enter them free of duty on a sworn statement that he intended to take up a farm in Canada and cultivate it. Upon investigation at the Custom House I found a year later he again crossed the line with several head of cattle and 8 horses, also farm implements and to escape paying duty swore to a similar statement as to his settlement in Canada, one being signed James Wright, the other signed James B. Wright.

The land not having any filings on it the State selected it. On one of my visits I found the land occupied by one Mose Pugsley, who informs me that he and his brother had purchased the house and other improvements from Mr. Wright, and that Mr. Wright would prove up on the land and deed same to Pugsley Bros. I informed Mr. Pugsley that the State had already selected the land but he thought I might be mistaken. The 160 acres involved in this contest are worth not less than $10.00 per acre, and I suggest that the Board use every effort to pro-

tect its rights and prevent this selection from being cancelled.

The other contest case is against C. H. Merrill to cancel his Desert filing on Sec. 36 T. 20 N. R. 10 E. for the reason that said land was known to be school land at the time of filing.

TRESPASSES.

There have been few trespasses during the year and they were small and with little difficulty have been adjusted satisfactory to the interests of the State.

Respectfully submitted,

HENRY NEILL,

State Land Agent.

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